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TALKS BY THREE. No. X

Subject : The Gardening of a Stone Wall.

Scene : The garden of a rambling old red-brick house.

The First—Mrs. Stultitia Opum.
The Other—Brown.
The Third—Vox.

The First was swinging in a hammock as she talked to *the Other*. Hers was not a contour designed for hammocks, but the Countess (who was twenty-five and slim) swung in a hammock, so Mrs. Opum did it too. She had to get in and she had to get out, but—well, she did it. Just now she was inside, and left well alone, only putting out her hand as *the Third* was announced.

‘Quite charmed to see you,’ she said. [‘Don’t’ go, Brown.] ‘Now you are going to tell us about old walls and all that. But first of all, we are in despair for want of a good blue. We have tried Viper’s Bugloss several times, but it won’t grow here, Brown believes for want of chalk.’

‘I don’t know that I can think off-hand,’ said *the Third*. ‘Oh, do you know a beautiful blue, Penstemon—*Penstemon Heteroflorum*, I think it is? I saw it in a garden in Hampshire the other day. It is a most lovely thing, and more or less of the blue you want.’

‘You might make a note of that, Brown,’ said *the First*.

‘Yes’m ; Hit a rum Florium, mum,’ *the Other* replied.

‘Well now,’ *the First* went on, ‘we are getting all ready. We are having the wall scraped and cleaned and newly pointed. The men are just doing it. Now, what’s the next thing?’

‘The next thing?’ replied *the First* in tones of horror. ‘Why, the next thing is to make the men undo all they have done, so far as you can, and then to send them about their business.’

The scene that followed may be better imagined than described. *The First’s* efforts at escape resulted in the snapping of the cord that held the head of the hammock ; and what with this and the routing of the bricklayers, there was not a dull moment in the next twenty minutes. But it was over at last, and then *the First* sank fanning in a chair and begged *the Third* to give her an idea what wall gardening meant.

‘To begin at the beginning,’ said *the Third*, ‘wall plants, of course, are rock plants ; walls to them are merely convenient rocks, with plenty of chinks and a useful mixture of soil for rooting in. You see, mortar is a mixture of sand and lime, and as this gets broken down by the action of the weather, and the surface of the stone itself, where exposed (we are speaking of sandstone), becomes to a certain extent friable, the smallest root fibres can find their way about. Also (though this applies but in a very limited way to the roots of plants), roots themselves appear to have some action over the stone. If you pull away a strong tree-root from a sand rock, you will see this for yourself.

‘A little trouble must be taken at first in establishing plants, and a few places should be hollowed out, into which rather better mould can be introduced. The plants should be shaded from the sun and kept damp to start with. Of course the damper the wall can be kept, at any rate for some time, the better things will do ; and moss will form, which itself acts as a sort of padding to retain the damp. On the shady side many of the ferns will grow well, many more than is commonly supposed, though polypody, spleenworts and wall-rue are obvious species to thrive. Then the snapdragons—the wild toadflax and others—wallflowers, and some of the brooms will, when once started, soon settle down and seed themselves. But there are many wild plants of less pretension, but—each in its own way—not less interesting. And although I know you hate scientific names, I am afraid that unless I give you these you will not be able to look them up in the botany books. The trivial names are so misleading. *Veronica arvensis*, wall speedwell is one of these ; *Reseda luteola*, Dyer’s rocket, is another ; *Colyledon umbilicus*, wall penny-wort ; *Fumaria officinalis*, common fumitory ; *Draba verna*, vernal whitlow grass (which flowers very early) ; *Arabis hirsuta*, hairy rock cress—oh, but the list is a very long one when once you start. Most of the plants which grow on rocks can be induced to flourish on walls with a little nursing.

'However, all I am anxious to point out, as I said before, is that just as you have Alpine rockeries and lily tanks, so a wall may be made a distinct feature in a garden with its own little flora all to itself. And when once you have carefully examined such a wall (say in some old Botanical Gardens, as those in Oxford), you will at once admit that it is worth cultivating for itself; that there is no more beautiful feature possible to a garden than an old stone wall covered with patches of bright-coloured flowers, or green with ferns and grasses.'

AIDS TO AMATEUR PHOTOGRAPHERS

Last month we mentioned that we were prepared to develop amateur negatives free of charge, and we shall be glad to supply details to any of our readers who happened to miss seeing the July number.

As several letters have reached us requiring rather full replies, we must ask our friends always to enclose a stamped envelope when a direct answer is needed. This may seem a paltry thing to ask for, but as the writer receives something like fifty letters per day, the postage account becomes a serious item in twelve months.

Lumiére's have succeeded in introducing a new fixing salt, which they name Anhydrous Acid Hypo. The advantages over the ordinary fixing bath is that it acts as a clearing and hardening bath and also that less washing is required. To those with a limited water supply or who work in hot climates, these points are of importance. The same firm also announce several new developers, which will be very useful for certain classes of work.

Dr. Hesekiel, of Frankfort-on-Maine, has succeeded in producing a new film, which will be available for English amateurs by the time this number is published. Its advantages over the celluloid film is that no chemical action is set up by the basis employed, consequently the film remains good for a longer period, and also that prints can be taken from either side without an appreciable loss of sharpness. This is an immense boon to carbon workers.

As there are no printed directions yet to be had, it may be useful to give directions for the using of these new films, which have been named "Secco-Films."

Each packet contains twelve sensitive films, which are wrapped in black paper; and also twelve strengthening films.

It is advisable on opening the packet to remove the strengthening films and put them on one side, in order to avoid subsequent mistakes, and these films should preferably be kept flat. With rollable films the strengthening sheets are packed in flat in separate packets.

Secco-Films may be exposed in any camera by means of the special carriers, which are supplied to order, or by the aid of any carrier which will keep them flat.

Development may be effected in exactly the same way as with dry plates, but we strongly advise the addition of 2% of glycerine to the developer. The film should be first soaked in water, or better still in water containing 2% of glycerine, till limp, and then placed face downwards in the developer and turned over. This precautionary treatment is only advised in order to avoid the formation of air bubbles, but the film may be laid direct into the developing dish and the developer flowed over in one even sweep, if air bubbles are avoided. It is really immaterial which side of the film is placed uppermost, but it is better to place the film face downward, as this obviates the very slight tendency to curl.

Density may be very easily judged by holding the negative up to the light in the ordinary way, and the paper support being rendered very translucent by the developer, there is not the slightest difficulty in judging density.

In order to avoid touching the film with the fingers, it may be laid on a glass plate and held in position with a couple of india-rubber bands.

Fixation is effected as usual, but we strongly recommend the use of an acid fixing bath, because it hardens and clears the negatives, but this is purely a matter of personal taste.

Washing is of course extremely easy because of the negative being on a porous support, and the hyposulphite is, therefore, more readily removed.